

[View this email in your browser](#)



Hello Fruit Growers!

I hope this finds everyone well and enjoying your fruit blossoms. Our kiwis (September Sun shown in photo above) and strawberries are in bloom, the blueberries are winding down, while to the delight of the bees, the raspberries are getting started.

Now, time for a reminder of Covid-inspired, socially-distanced work awaiting you on your fruit growing estate! What follows is the “to do list” for this week.

1. The honeyberries are turning blue, so it is time to put on netting, unless you are trying to fatten up the robins or believe in sharing your tasty berries.
2. Sawfly larva have begun to appear on the currants, so get your Spinosad (Home Depot-Monterey Garden Insect Spray) ready and be on the lookout for them. Miss them, and you will have a naked, defoliated plant. (more embarrassing than harmful!)
3. Check the tips and new shoots of your newly grafted apples and apple trees for aphids. Spray with Neem Oil or insecticidal soap if needed. Check daily.
4. Look over your strawberries for spittlebugs. You will know you have them if you see a foamy blob on a strawberry stem or leaf. You can spray them off with a strong stream of water or reach into the insect spit (yum!) to find the bug and squish it. They generally don't harm the plants, but they can deform the leaves and leave spit on the fruit. Click the [link](#) to learn more.
5. The apple trees have set fruit and it is time to start thinning the regular apples. Thinning will result in larger fruit, provided you water regularly. I prefer using a comfortable pair of scissors to snip the gazillion unwanted little apples. Select the best apple in each cluster, usually the center king blossom, and drop the others. Once you have each flower cluster reduced to one fruit, eyeball the spacing. The apples should be 6-9 inches apart on the branch. Be careful about how much fruit you allow on a young tree or small branch as apples are heavy. If the limb is small, keep apples toward the center. In August, it is not uncommon to get some winds and a heavy apple swinging on the end of a small limb can put a lot of stress on the branch. It is not necessary to thin small crab apples (Dolgo, Altiaski, etc.) but some larger crabs like Whitney benefit from some thinning (in between that for a regular apple and crab) as it helps keep them from being biennial bearers.

Dawn and Fred Deiser have been successfully growing grapes outside for a number of years. Dawn has propagated their grapes to give away as part of a fruit growing experiment to see if others can successfully grow grapes as well. To be part of the experiment, you need to have a house with a place to plant against the building where there is a crawl-space, basement, or lower level for increased soil warmth. This planting spot must receive good sun exposure, and be sheltered from the wind. If you have a planting spot that meets those requirements, and you are interested in trying to grow a grape, then click the link to [email Dawn](#) for a free plant. Once we know who is interested, arrangements will be made to distribute the grapes. Afterwards, Dawn and Fred will periodically email you to see how your grape is doing.

George Stadnicky has a pineapple guava (click for [photo](#)) that needs a home. He purchased it a year ago from the Mile 5.2 Nursery in Eagle River. If you have a large sunny room, and always wanted your own guava source, then click the link to [email George](#).

Emily Becker has been helping with the fruit trees at Airport Heights Elementary. This summer they replaced the cages around the trees. Emily wrote me that “through a series of mishaps and other misadventures, the school gave us....over 100 cages. (We needed 9.) They told us to give them to community gardeners. The orchard on 3rd ave is going to take 40. If you know of a group that could use stakes and cages, let me know!” Click the link to [email Emily](#) If you know of an interested party.

My final thought for you this week is to enjoy the distraction of caring for your fruit. While snipping little apples, it is the perfect time to contemplate the gift of nature that we growers uniquely enjoy. My mornings are usually spent waking up, reading the paper and making music. [Playing my clarinets](#) and writing music, or about music is my real job so-to-speak. After lunch I am on to other projects, outside, socializing with our fruit trees for whom it doesn't matter if I wear a mask or stand closer than six feet. I can only marvel at what we can grow in our beautiful state, and laugh at how quickly the weeds can get out of hand. If only the pandemic was weeds.

Stay healthy!

Mark Wolbers
President, APFGA

Copyright © 2020 Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

